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SOFT POWER PROJECTION

by

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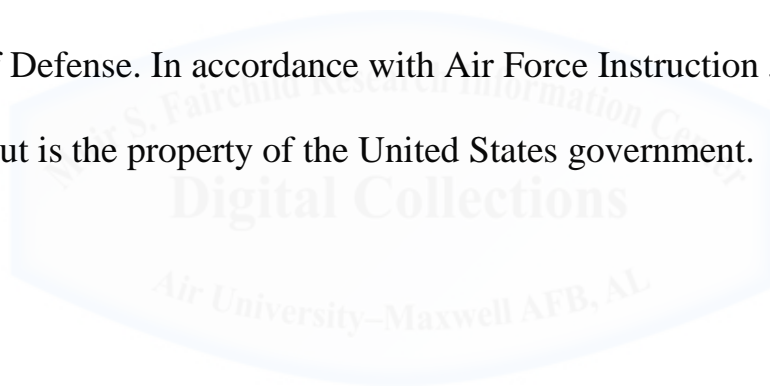
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Abstract

The United States military has been predisposed to fight conventional warfare since the Civil War. Today the United States is confronted with numerous irregular wars characterized by counterinsurgency, stabilization, and reconstruction operations. In an attempt to prevent future irregular wars, the United States must adapt its whole of government approach to leveraging “soft power” to mitigate or prevent future conflicts around the world. To do so, the nation must empower and support the State Department’s leadership role in shaping the diplomatic, political, and military global environment. As a supporting capability, the Department of Defense’s fleet of strategic airlifters represents a critical mission enabler that can rapidly project interagency shaping operations. By assessing, planning, coordinating, and practicing and executing interagency humanitarian relief efforts, the United States can leverage its national soft power to attract, not coerce, global audiences.

In a world embroiled in irregular wars, counter-insurgencies, and simmering regional conflicts the United States military can no longer hide behind its twentieth century large-scale conventional warfare doctrine. Without degrading combat effectiveness, the military can better posture and utilize its existing soft power projection capabilities to support national security objectives in order to more effectively shape, if not prevent, future conventional conflicts. By developing proactive global emergency response plans, practicing and executing those plans, and effectively publicizing the nation's benevolent actions through a focused strategic communications plan, the United States can more effectively shape its position in the global security environment.

While the United States military is winning tactical and operational level battles around the world, the nation itself is losing many of its strategic engagements. From the Civil War through September 11, 2001 the United States military focused primarily on defeating national armies in large scale conventional combat operations. As a result the United States military's organization, training programs, and equipment reflected a conventional "hard power" mindset. However, since September the eleventh, the United States has found itself conducting sustained strategic "soft power" engagements with nations and transnational groups. Nations apply soft power through positive interactions that build and reinforce complex relationships. Trust, confidence, and understanding are by products for both sides of the exchange. This interaction can come in many forms, and has been used primarily by the Department of State. Faced with prolonged irregular and counterinsurgency wars though, the Department of Defense is beginning to transform some of its previous hard power doctrine into soft power applications of military outreach and cooperation. The military's transition from a hard to soft power focus is

monumental, and requires significant changes in not only the way its forces train, but also requires changes in United States military force structure and equipment inventory.

Global popular support has significant impact on the nation's ability to shape the world, and is a critical aspect of taking advantage of soft power applications. In order to maintain the trust and confidence of our allies and positively influence the mind set of potential adversaries, the United States should focus more of its attention on improving its global image through coordinated soft power operations. To do this, the United States can better leverage its air mobility force's tremendous global reach capabilities to support national interagency objectives early and often. Air Mobility Command's rapid global power projection capability, able to support a diverse spectrum of stabilization, reconstruction, and shaping operations, should be employed to create synergistic "global reach" effects for more United States government agencies. While technically feasible, no strategic coordination exists that prioritizes and focuses the United States "whole of government" soft power capabilities to shape, and possibly prevent, future conflicts.

For example, recent counter insurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have placed a high premium on coalition nation building and interagency operations. While Iraq and Afghanistan dominate the headlines and represent the United States' largest military commitments in the twenty-first century, the military has been busy conducting other unplanned stabilization and reconstruction operations around the world. On December 26, 2004 a massive earthquake struck off the coast of Sumatra, Indonesia. The earthquake measured 8.9 on the Richter scale and was the fifth largest in recorded history. The massive quake generated a tsunami that ripped through the Indian Ocean killing over 200,000 people and displacing over one million in at least eleven different countries throughout the region, several of which were

predominantly Muslim.¹ This single event brought the nations of the world together in one large humanitarian relief effort.

Leading the nation's response, United States Pacific Command deployed the nation's first airlift assets to Thailand on 27 December, and flew the first U.S. military aid mission on 30 December, four short days after the random earthquake and tsunami struck. Since the tsunami struck, the United States has contributed \$350 million for post tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction, and committed over 16,000 military personnel, 26 ships, 58 helicopters, and 43 fixed-wing aircraft to help the victims across the region.² The rapid international response helped ease suffering, stabilize the affected governments, and highlight the need for longer term regional assistance.

Recently the nation came to the aide of those reeling from disastrous earthquakes in Haiti and Chile that killed more than 230,000 people in the western hemisphere.³ Due to its poor construction techniques, Haiti was hardest hit of the two and accounted for the vast majority of earthquake related deaths. Again, the United States led the global response and committed its resources to helping those in need. United States airlifters alone flew over 2,400 sorties into and out of the affected region. In all they transported twenty-three thousand passengers and twenty-seven million pounds of critically needed supplies and equipment in support of the United States mission in Haiti.⁴



Haitian Relief Supplies Stack Up and Evacuees Onboard USAF C-17

Whether covering a tsunami in distant Indonesia or an earthquake in the nation's proverbial back yard in Haiti, the fundamental humanitarian assistance story lines are often portrayed by the media the same way. Media outlets immediately report on natural or manmade disasters to capture the interest of the public. Stories and images from these disasters often pull at the heart strings of global audiences and generate significant ratings. Subsequent stories of rescue and assistance give the audience a sense of hope and leave viewers with a sense of conclusion, while the actual humanitarian crisis may not reach its highest for days, months, or even years. Recognizing we live in a very connected world filled with cameras, computers, televisions, and telephones, it is important that we use highly publicized events and media outlets to demonstrate willingness and capability to come to the aid of those in need.

Humanitarian assistance operations help reinforce existing positive relationships, and strengthen international trust and security throughout the world. The expediency and scope of the response is a tremendous example of power projection, and highlights the positive impacts rapid stabilization and reconstruction efforts can have on nations and regions. The positive image associated with stabilization and reconstruction sends a powerful message that transcends geographic and cultural boundaries. To maximize the constructive message associated with the nation's response, initial relief operations must be as expeditious as physically possible. The speed of the response may end up sacrificing some operational effectiveness, but the initial priority of effort should be the strategic message of support, not the actual delivery of relief supplies. Subsequent large scale operations should subsequently focus on the effectiveness of the relief effort.

United States Soft Power Coordination

In *Public Diplomacy and Soft Power*, Joseph Nye defines Soft Power as “the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment.” More than any nation in the world, the United States has diplomatic, economic, and information soft power capabilities at its disposal. The application of soft power is often more subtle and nuanced than the application of “hard” military power, and creates long term trust and confidence between nations. Soft power reinforces many of the cultural values the United States espouses, and is the cornerstone of U.S. military and diplomatic efforts around the world. As such, governmental agencies should support soft power doctrine to the maximum extent possible. For the U.S. military this does not mean that it should abandon the backbone of its existence, its conventional combat capability. Instead, the military needs to look inward to see how its existing capabilities can be leveraged to accomplish or support a wider spectrum of national political objectives.

The Department of Defense already leverages soft power daily in a myriad of ways to include civil affairs, humanitarian assistance, foreign internal defense training, military exercises, exchange programs, foreign military sales, and stabilization and reconstruction operations. Unfortunately, no single organization or directive guides the nation’s strategic soft power efforts and initiatives. To be truly effective, soft power should be applied in concert with other national United States Government agencies, and should be focused on the areas that it will have the most positive effect. The level of geographic and cultural understanding required to effectively implement soft power lies outside of the Department of Defense and resides in the State Department. Yet there exists no department level process or strategy that focuses the government’s soft power initiatives to positively shape the global environment. This schism is

not a new problem, and is the topic of many transformative soft power measures dating at least five years.

Disappointed by the lack of a coordinated national response during stabilization and reconstruction efforts in both Iraq and Afghanistan, in December 2005 President Bush issued National Security Presidential Directive number forty-four (NSPD-44) to force better governmental interagency cooperation. NSPD-44, titled *Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization*, was written to “promote the security of the United States through improved coordination, planning, and implementation for reconstruction and stabilization assistance for foreign states and regions at risk of, in, or in transition from conflict or civil strife.”⁵ In it, President Bush appointed the State Department as the lead agency in charge of United States Reconstruction and Stabilization efforts, with the other agencies (to include DoD) in supporting roles.

Soon thereafter the Department of State created the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) to lead the nation’s integrated responses. Per the S/CRS and in line with NSPD-44, “complex transitions may require the resources of the whole U.S. Government, but dispersed and duplicated responsibility can result in overlapping efforts, missed opportunities, and a lack of coherence. To address this challenge, S/CRS is working with U.S. Government civilian and military agencies, non-governmental and multilateral partners to refine and implement the Whole-of-Government approach to the reconstruction, stabilization, and conflict transformation of fragile and failed states.”⁶ The office leads the effort to assess, plan, coordinate, and deploy to “leverage a set of new and institutionalized foreign policy tools to achieve the U.S. government’s various reconstruction and stabilization (R&S) objectives abroad.”⁷ Recognizing it lacked an international response force to execute these mandates, the

S/CRS established three civilian response corps to lead the nation's interagency reconstruction and stabilization responses: the Active Response Corp, the Standby Response Corps, and the Reserve Civilian Response Corps.

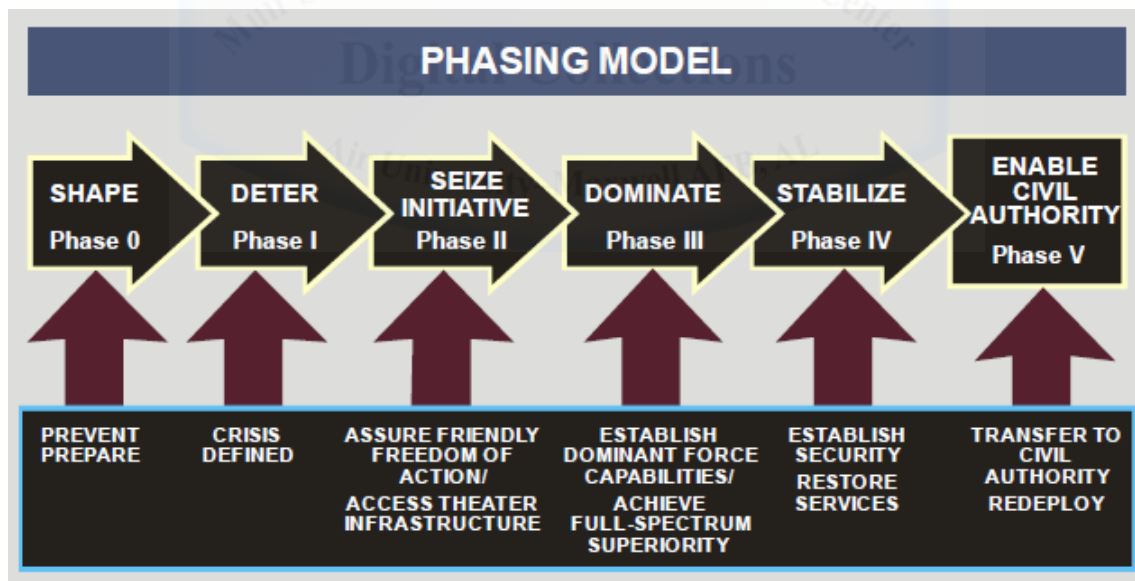
The Active Response Corps' (ARC) charter is the primary team that serves as the State Department's stabilization and reconstruction proverbial "911" emergency response force. ARC team members serve 1-year rotations to the S/CRS and are the first to deploy during the initial stage of reconstruction and stabilization operations.⁸ Authorized and funded for 250 members, in 2009 the ARC consisted of only seventy-eight interagency members. Capable of deploying to crisis locations within 48 hours, the same seventy-eight members of the ARC provide the S/CRS' continuity and full time work force for assessing, planning, coordinating, and deploying to support the nation's current and future stabilization and reconstruction operations.⁹

The Standby Response Corps (SRC) represents the State Department's reconstruction and stabilization surge capacity that augments ARC activities when operations require additional staff or specialized skills. Unlike the ARC, SRC team members are not permanently assigned to the S/CRS and are drawn from their active jobs when needed.¹⁰ The SRC included 554 interagency members in 2009, an eight time increase since the previous year, but well below the 2000 authorized and funded by congress.¹¹

The third and final S/CRS response corps is the reserve civilian response corps. This team is made up of U.S. civilians who have a wide span of civil skills and experiences useful for stabilization and reconstruction operations. Reserve members consist of civil experts like civil engineers, police officers, judges, and public administrators. Civil reservists serve 4-year terms and are expected to deploy for up to 1 year out of their 4-year term to support worldwide operations as needed.¹² Unfortunately, the State Department and S/CRC has had trouble

adequately staffing members for all three units, especially the reserves. Currently, the S/CRS does not have a single reserve member on its team.¹³ Meanwhile, the Department of Defense continues to bear the majority of stabilization and reconstruction burdens.

Spurred to create department level guidance to answer NSPD-44's call for prolonged stabilization and reconstruction capabilities, the Department of Defense incorporated many of its soft power concepts into its doctrine. The department rolled soft power, to include reconstruction and stabilization efforts, into the Department of Defense's "shaping operations" concept. Accordingly, shaping operations dissuades or deters potential adversaries and assures or solidifies relationships with friends or allies.¹⁴ As depicted below, the Department of Defense added shaping operations to the front of its conventional military phasing model and labeled it "phase zero."



JP 3-0, Joint Operations Phasing Model¹⁵

During this phase of operations, the Department of Defense directs its commanders "to organize and train forces, rehearse key actions, establish operational area access, secure space capabilities, and conduct stability operations as needed during the "shape" phase of a major operation of campaign."¹⁶ By conducting these type of soft power operations, the Department of

Defense hopes to add to the United States deterrent effects (potentially blended with phase 2 operations) to establish and maintain access to operational areas where forces are likely to operate, ensuring forward presence, basing, freedom of navigation, and cooperation with allies and/or coalition nations to enhance operational reach. Likewise, stability operations may be required to quickly restore security and infrastructure or provide humanitarian relief in select portions of the operational area to dissuade further adversary actions or help ensure access and future success.¹⁷

In 2009 the Department of Defense further advocated soft power applications when it stated “stability operations are a core U.S. military mission that the Department of Defense shall be prepared to conduct with proficiency equivalent to combat operations.”¹⁸ This statement represents a tremendous paradigm shift in the United States military and, if implemented, will force the Department of Defense to shift from a mindset focused on kinetic operations that kill or destroy to one that thoroughly understands and implements many civilian-military soft power applications. Some of these soft power operations include stabilization and reconstruction efforts, humanitarian relief, foreign exchanges, international exercise, and natural disaster relief.

The challenge the nation faces today is how to best integrate the national response to future crises in the most effective and productive manner. By working together, the State Department and the Department of Defense can combine the knowledge, capabilities, and resources necessary to advance a whole of government approach to shape the nation’s relationships and improve our image around the world.

According to the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), a Department of Defense strategic planning product, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts help prevent crises. By alleviating suffering and dealing with crises in their early stages, U.S. forces help prevent

disorder from spiraling into wider conflict or crisis. They also demonstrate the goodwill and compassion of the United States.¹⁹ While geographic combatant commanders are responsible for contingency and crisis action planning within their respective areas of responsibility, the nation as a whole should create a proactive policy to offer and provide immediate humanitarian assistance to friends, allies, and even potential adversaries following unforeseen and destabilizing natural disasters.

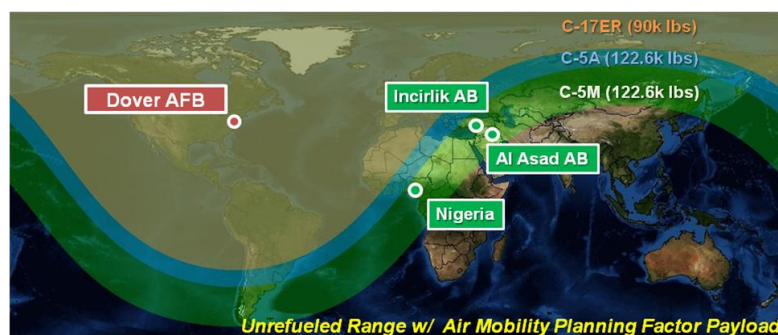
Soft Power Projection

Airlift offers the fastest, most flexible, and most visible transportation option for urgent, short notice requirements like disaster relief and humanitarian assistance efforts. By using military air transports, the United States government has a readily available airlift fleet at its disposal, capable of expediting supplies, personnel and equipment globally. The speed and precision of United States military aircraft delivering time critical supplies to people and nations in need represent tremendous strategic communications victories. Unlike commercial air carriers, military aircraft symbolize the United States government and the American people. Their presence in a peace time scenario represents the nation's capability and will to support others. After the initial response has been satisfied by the fastest method available, the weight of effort could be transferred to military and commercial assets. Finally, sustained overland and sea routes can be established to transport vast quantities of personnel and supplies to the people and places that need them most.

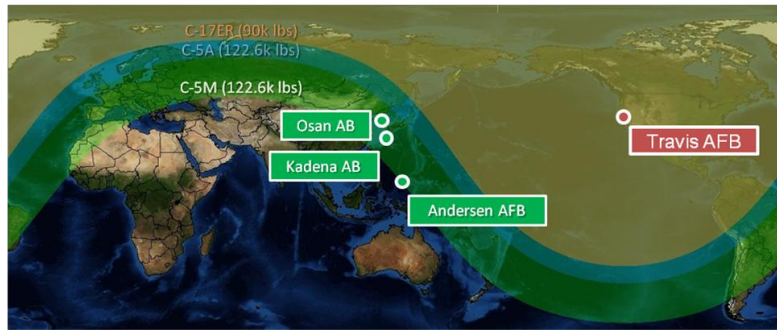
This concept of operations was dramatically highlighted during the earthquake relief efforts in Haiti in 2010. Within hours United States Southern Command, in close coordination with its interagency partners, quickly moved to help relieve the pain and suffering caused by the devastating natural disaster. Initially, the humanitarian assistance and stabilization efforts

dominated every media outlet's news coverage. Images of Air Force C-130's and C-17's landing in Haiti dominated the news as the United States began airlifting supplies and personnel into the devastated nation. As additional civilian and military forces arrive on scene they focused on assessing the disaster relief needs, opening up critical distribution infrastructure, and providing time sensitive rescue, security, and sustainment services.²⁰ At the height of the mission's initial response, more than 20,000 U.S. troops, 20 ships and 130 aircraft were in Haiti to help.²¹ Once sustained operations were underway and local infrastructure was able to support relief efforts, bulk supplies and equipment were transported by more economical and sustainable methods.

To support the nation's immediate response, the United States Air Force already has the mobility platforms, crews, and global infrastructure to support the rapid airlift requirements around the world. The global scale of United States strategic airlifters is often difficult to visualize. The two diagrams below demonstrate the unassisted (with a single aircrew and unrefueled) range of the nation's strategic mobility aircraft when flown from the East or West coasts of the continental United States.



Strategic Airlift's Unrefueled Global Range (Eastbound)²²



Strategic Airlift's Unrefueled Global Range (Westbound)²³

When loaded and flown from of the continental United States, the Air Force's C-17 and C-5 fleets are capable of reaching almost anywhere the world. When combined with air refueling and a comprehensive ground based support network, the nation's strategic reach is truly global. Additional United States mobility aircraft operating out of Germany, the Middle East, Japan, Alaska, and Hawaii further expand the nation's global reach capabilities. With these resources on hand the nation has the ability to airlift critical relief in the time it takes to pick up supplies and fly to the disaster stricken area. The speed of the nation's response is not dictated by the capability to act, but the speed of the processes in place to request and coordinate the response.

Plan for Success

To improve the impact and relevance of the United States humanitarian assistance missions, the nation should pre-plan, pre-coordinate and pre-authorize critical response elements before individual crises occur. These critical elements include geographic access, initial response requirements (supplies, personnel, equipment, etc), delivery distribution mechanisms, and an appropriate strategic message to compliment the actions. Once established, the critical elements should be revised and exercised regularly to build a robust response capability. More importantly, the open cooperation and dialogue between nations represents a significant soft power success regardless if the disaster relief plans are ever executed in earnest.

Without access to states or regions via land, air or sea, the nation cannot effectively deliver a timely physical response. Long standing access can be granted or strengthened through many soft power initiatives to include diplomatic dialogue, civil or military exercises, and international agreements over time. Another unplanned challenge may be caused by the crisis itself. When areas are struck by destructive natural or manmade forces, physical conditions near the crisis area (damaged runway, degraded communications, unknown damage to local infrastructure, etc) may limit access into and out of affected areas. To help mitigate localized access restrictions, supplies, personnel, and equipment may be flown into the region and then transported via alternative transportation methods, as was the case in Haiti. Due to limited space at Port Au Prince's International Airport, many disaster relief missions were forced to fly supplies into neighboring Dominican Republic.²⁴ The supplies were then ground transported to the affected areas in Haiti. While the supplies eventually made to those who needed it the most, there are several aspects of these indirect deliveries that diminish the immediate strategic communications message. First, the intended audience usually can't grasp how long it will take for the supplies to reach those in need. Second, the image of supplies being delivered to a visibly unaffected and otherwise unknown location strips a lot of the operational impact.

Once access is granted, the question becomes what "resources" should be delivered to help stabilize the crisis environment. Pertinent information can be gleaned from previous response operations and should serve a planning template. Regardless of the location and the nature of the crisis, there are many common "key supplies" that can be pre-packaged and pre-positioned to mobility hubs for rapid delivery. Key non-perishable supplies like food, water, medicine, and basic construction materials are not expensive but are often in high demand during initial response operations. In addition to generic response supplies, specialized sets of materials

and equipment like water filtration units, communications hardware, medical gear, and search and rescue recovery equipment can be staged for immediate shipment. When combined with experienced on-call civil or military technicians, tailored initial response resources can provide first responders critical capabilities in a crisis environment.

Once the resources are delivered, they should be distributed quickly and effectively to those who need them the most. This becomes a major challenge in underdeveloped or devastated regions, and requires detailed understanding of the situation on the ground. In some cases, the addition of basic supplies can cause an immediate security risk. As seen during the United Nation's mission to Somalia in 1992, without proper security the introduction of humanitarian relief supplies can further destabilize an already dangerous operating environment²⁵. In desolate or absolutely devastated areas, it may be unfeasible to transport the supplies to those in need due to limited infrastructure or limited indigenous delivery capabilities. Regardless, agents on the ground should understand some of the basic logistic needs of the initial and follow on deliveries. While not cruel and inhumane, the right answer may be to just store the supplies in a corner of an airfield or a corner of a hanger until appropriate security and distribution infrastructure is in place. Contrary to linear military mind sets, the intended effect is the delivery of the strategic message through the delivery of the recovery supplies. The strategic effects are accomplished once the message of support is received by the target audience. The follow on delivery of the supplies should be considered tactical victories that together form strategic success.

Wrapping up the frenzied efforts, the strategic message should be short and to the point. It should be accompanied by visual images and should be distributed as quickly and as widely as possible. As was seen in Haiti, the global community wants to know that help is on the way. The details about the aid package itself (delivery method, composition, size, and distribution) are

not as important as the relief mobilization itself. President Obama's published article in Newsweek magazine three days after the earthquake titled "Why Haiti Matters" is a great example of an effective strategic message. While the article itself has a lot of pertinent information associated with the Haiti relief efforts, it is constructed around a single key strategic talking point. In the article President Obama says, "...But above all, we act for a very simple reason: in times of tragedy, the United States of America steps forward and helps. That is who we are. That is what we do..."²⁶ The public wants to know that relief efforts are committed and on the way. Emphasizing his point again in a speech on the White House lawn, flanked by his national security team President Obama also said, "American stands with you. The world stands with you...Today, you must know that help is arriving and much more help is on the way."²⁷ Whether in words or in actions, soft power operations should be clear and unmistakable to the world.

To accompany the strategic words, the nation must use images to visually tell the relief story. Images of an American military aircraft, carrying critical personnel and supplies, offloading at the site where they are needed most are extremely powerful messages that reflect the nation's commitment. Together the power of the word and the image create an everlasting memory that nests within the global conscious. Timed with heightened media coverage associated with a large scale disaster, words and images best project the positive American values that we hope to promote around the world. Together they are the strategic message.

Balancing Soft and Hard Power Capabilities

The United States military has traditionally been predisposed to exercise hard power, as demonstrated during both World Wars, Korea, Vietnam and Desert Storm. Incorporating soft power into the military's conventional mindset may take a generation to fully understand the

impacts a successful reconstruction and stabilization mission can have on the United States ability to influence the global environment. The demonstrated effectiveness of asymmetric threats against the United States since the Cold War has forced the Department of Defense to reevaluate its hard and soft power concepts. Since 2006, Department of Defense instructions, manuals, and reports have begun to acknowledge the shift from purely conventional conflicts to prolonged non-combat stabilization and reconstruction efforts. Though there is a growing shift to be more responsive to irregular warfare requirements, the services are primarily still postured to confront conventional threats on the battlefield, and are reluctant to make the transition away from their conventional combat force structure. Recognizing the need to adapt to fight the current wars as opposed to future hypothetical wars, the nation's civilian leadership is forcing the department to shift its priorities from hard to soft power capabilities.

Soft power initiatives are not widely considered or regularly implemented outside of special operations communities and State Department lead missions. Phase zero is still not well understood or embraced by conventional forces. Generals Petraeus, Odierno, and McChrystal have brought the counter insurgent philosophy to the front line conventional and unconventional units in Iraq and Afghanistan.²⁸ A key component of their counterinsurgency operations are implementing soft powers that attempt to deprive insurgents of their popular support, effectively making the insurgency wither on the proverbial vine.

There is a lot of room to expand the capabilities and reach of the soft power operations implemented in Iraq and Afghanistan into regional phase zero plans. Through shaping operations, the military can better advance national security objectives and deter or prevent future conflicts. The most important aspect of integrating phase zero shaping operations into the nation's planning process is properly integrating the interagency plans and responses.

Synchronized planning across all of the governmental agencies is necessary to generate the best response in the quickest time with the most powerful strategic message.

A presidential directive similar in content and construction to NSPD-44 should assign State Department as the lead agency responsible for planning and executing global “shaping” operations. This directive would provide the State Department the authority to develop, coordinate, and execute a strategic plan that would synchronize the nation’s global response. The State Department is the best organization to lead this effort because it is already in tune with the situation on the ground via the nation’s global embassy network. Foreign Service Officers’ cultural understanding, continuous contact with host nations, and diplomatic skills make them best suited to implement prolonged soft power initiatives. While this added responsibility would no doubt require additional planning and coordination staff, the State Department would not be the only department responsible for conducting soft power initiatives.

Lead by the State Department, the other departments (to include the Department of Defense) would be in supporting roles and would be obligated to contribute forces, resources, and expertise to conduct a myriad of phase zero operations. As part of the supported/supporting relationship, the departments should develop a system of transparent funding capable of reaching across governmental agencies as needed to support shaping operations. As such, operational priorities should also be adjusted to reflect the strategic effects that shaping operations have in the global commons.

While similar coordination would have to take place throughout all of the services, for airlift, shaping operations should be prioritized in a manner that is in line with the nation’s shaping policy. As a minimum and in accordance with doctrine, shaping operations should be prioritized as high as contingency support missions, “1B” priorities. Yet according to the

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 4120.02B that governs airlift priorities codes, international joint exercises, distinct soft power operations, are currently assigned a “2B” priority. This priority falls below presidential-directed, Secretary of Defense directed, special operations, search and rescue, critical homeland defense, special weapon transportation, command and control, contingency deployment, contingency redeployment, routine law enforcement deployment, contingency sustainment, aeromedical evacuation, counter drug, and industrial supply missions.²⁹ To put these numbers into perspective, in 2009 the United States Transportation Command flew 62,500 contingency support sorties. In the same year it flew 1,125 joint exercise sorties.³⁰ While it is not prudent to say the United States should conduct as many exercise support missions as it flies contingency support missions, it is important to remember that soft power exercises may help prevent future contingencies and should be supported to the maximum extent possible. As contingency support requirements diminish in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States should utilize military airlift as a “preventative” approach to contingencies as opposed to a “reactionary” approach.

Airlift, a single component in the whole of government toolkit, represents a key enabler in an integrated interagency soft power projection program. Departmental red tape and funding issues should not stand in the way of integrated interagency soft power operations. To best utilize the interagency assets, the State Department should develop a robust planning staff capable of planning and coordinating global shaping initiatives. This staff should be trained to work along side other department planners, and should include non-governmental agencies in the process to the maximum extent possible. As part of their strategic plans for humanitarian and disaster relief operations, the shaping planners should have rapid responses ready to execute at a moment’s notice with the appropriate personnel, equipment and transportation methodology in

place. For humanitarian and disaster relief operations, prepositioned stores of materials can be prepackaged for global airlift. These resources should be strategically located at key airlift transportation hubs like Charleston Air Force Base, South Carolina, Ramstein Air Force Base, Germany and Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii. Upon notice of a natural or manmade disaster, airlift resources can be immediately retasked to pick up the relief supplies.

The planners should insure that airlifters arriving in a disaster area should be self sufficient. They should carry enough fuel to fly in and then out of the area since jet fuel may not be available at the destination. In addition to carrying in relief supplies, the aircraft should carry the material handling equipment necessary to offload the supplies that they are delivering. This template mitigates some of the possible initial restrictions that may prevent access into and out of a disaster area. Through knowledge of the area, detailed planning, and robust coordination it is possible to overcome many frontline adversities and enable the nation's strategic message.

In order to capture the strategic communications message, the mission should include a preapproved media source capable of capturing photographs and video. This source should know and understand the national strategic communications plan associated with the relief effort, and should be equipped to capture the pertinent information, images, and impact that the mission had on the relief effort. The common expression is that a picture is worth a thousand words. In today's day and age, a picture may be worth a thousand, but a video may be worth a million words. In combination with a scripted strategic message in the form of a speech, an article, or an interview, visual images allow the United States message to reach everyone within electronic reach.

To build up to and facilitate these immediate operations, the staff should conduct regular disaster relief exercises. These exercises would serve two purposes. The first is to "train like

you fight.” The act of executing simulated disaster relief supplies, personnel, and equipment into regions prone to natural disasters trains the primary forces responsible for executing the response. This process insures the system is functioning, streamlines operations, and keeps the forces engaged. The second, and possibly greater benefit, are the international interactions that they would stimulate. The act of coordinating and executing the soft power exercises accomplishes many of the same mission objectives the primary relief mission hopes to accomplish. The demonstrated capability and will to assist foreign nations during possible times of need is clearly evident. As such, both nations learn something about each other and themselves in the process.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Rapid and flexible global reach provides the United States a unique ability to project its decisive power in almost any manner its political leaders choose. While constructed around conventional military force generation requirements, the United States mobility air forces are capable of supporting numerous military and civilian national security options. Through prior planning and coordination, air mobility can create and sustain soft power opportunities in peace and during conflict. Open dialogue created under the auspices of preparing for future disasters allows United States soft power to influence and reduce the risk of future “hard power” conflicts. If utilized to help other nations during their time of need, the U.S. should respond quickly and communicate the positive message of international support and hope. The nation should appoint the State Department as the lead agency responsible for planning, coordination, and executing global shaping operations. As such, the State Department should be equipped and supported to accomplish the nation’s soft power missions. Rapid airlift, while just a single

component of an integrated disaster response plan, represents a critical capability that can be easily accessible to interagency planners during times of peace and crisis.



Endnotes

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- ¹ USPACOM, Operation Unified Assistance, presentation, slide 3
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Borenstein, Seth. "Not more quakes, just more people in quake zones." Associated Press, 8 March 2010, http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20100308/ap_on_sc/earthquakes (accessed on 8 March 2010)
- ⁴ 618th Tanker/Airlift Control Center. "Operation Unified Response - Onload/Offload Summary," spreadsheet, 22 February 2010
- ⁵ National Security Presidential Decision-44, 7 December 2005, p 1
- ⁶ State Department, Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization: What We Do, <http://www.state.gov/s/crs/what/index.htm> (accessed on 4 April 2010)
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Government Accounting Office, "Stabilization and Reconstruction: Actions are Needed to Develop a Planning and Coordination Framework and Establish the Civilian Reserve Corps," GAO-08-39. November 2007, p 22
- ⁹ State Department, Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, "Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization 2009 Year in Review: Smart Power in Action," pamphlet, p 8
- ¹⁰ Government Accounting Office, Stabilization and Reconstruction: Actions are Needed to Develop a Planning and Coordination Framework and Establish the Civilian Reserve Corps, p 22
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